



File Code: 1570

Date: December 13, 2016

Defenders of Wildlife
Mr. Ben Prater
1 Rankin Avenue, 2nd Floor
Asheville, N.C. 28801

Dear Mr. Prater:

This letter is in response to your objection dated October 25, 2016 (objection number #17-08-12-03-219), regarding the proposed Revised Land Management Plan (revised plan) for the Francis Marion National Forest. Forest Supervisor Rick Lint is the responsible official for this revision decision. His decision would approve the revised plan and be based on alternative 2, as displayed in the plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

The purpose of the revised plan is to guide future projects, practices, uses and protection measures to assure sustainable multiple-use management on the Francis Marion National Forest System land over the next 15 years. Revised plan components include desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards and guidelines on three overlapping scales; along with the suitability determination of national forest lands for timber production and for various other uses. The three different scales where plan components would be applied include forest-wide plan components, two management areas (management areas 1 and 2) and four contiguous geographic areas that are called "resource integration zones" (see Revised Plan, chapters 1 and 2).

My review of your objection was conducted in accordance with 36 CFR 219, subpart B (the pre-decisional administrative review process). The intent of this pre-decisional process is to allow interested individuals to voice objections and point out potential remedies prior to approval of a decision. With a pre-decision objection process, the responsible official, the reviewing officer and the objector have the opportunity to seek reasonable remedies to conflicting views before the plan is approved. I thoroughly reviewed the planning record and the objection record, including your objection, recommendations (remedies) and the comments you submitted to prepare for our resolution meeting.

A resolution meeting was held on December 1 and 2 in Columbia, South Carolina. A complete list of attendees has been filed in the planning record. By the close of the meeting we had not completely resolved your objection; however, we shared areas where we could come to agreement. I appreciate your commitment to this process and believe I have a better understanding of your concerns.



OBJECTION ISSUES

After reviewing your objection and the transmittal letter from the forest supervisor, your objection brought up approximately 77 issues in the following five objection topic areas:

1. Species of Conservation Concern (SCC)
2. Red-cockaded Woodpecker.
3. Plan component specificity
4. At-risk species
5. Timber and National Forest Management Act

Please see the enclosed document which includes issue statements organized by objection topic, my response and my instructions to the responsible official. Please note that my review addresses topics 2 through 5. Glenn Casamassa, the Reviewing Officer for the Chief of the Forest Service, addressed your objection issues on the selection of SCC (topic 1).

CONCLUSION

I want to thank you for taking the time to review, provide comments on the revised plan and for meeting with us to discuss your objection. I would like to reiterate that we are committed to working together and moving forward. If you have questions concerning the processing of your objection, please contact Shannon Kelardy in the regional office at (404) 347-2719.

This letter documents the completion of my objection review process. The SCC objection review has also been completed. Once the forest addresses my instructions, Forest Supervisor Lint will sign the record of decision [36 CFR 219.58(a) and (b)] and approve the Francis Marion Revised Land Management Plan. This written response is the final decision on your objection of this revised plan, and is not subject to further administrative review by the Forest Service or the Department of Agriculture [36 CFR 219.57(b)(3)].

Sincerely,



TONY TOOKE
Regional Forester

Enclosures (2): Summary of instructions, Objection Response

cc: Region 8 Objections